

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously Presented) A shaft coupling assembly comprising:

a coupling element including a shaft-receiving slot having a bottom surface and a bolt receiving through bore extending through the coupling element perpendicular to the shaft receiving slot;

a retaining bolt extendable through the coupling element bolt receiving through bore such that the retaining bolt extends at least partially into the shaft-receiving slot;

a shaft configured for interconnection with said coupling element, the shaft comprising:

an axial shaft body having upper and lower surfaces and terminating in a forward end;

a bolt receiving recess in the upper shaft surface adjacent the forward shaft end; and

the shaft body forward end having a substantially planar surface except for at least one projection extending axially from the shaft forward end, the at least one projection having an upper surface contiguous with the upper shaft surface and positioned completely above a horizontal midplane of the shaft body.

2. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 1 wherein the shaft body has a given cross-sectional area and the projection has a cross-sectional area substantially less than the shaft body cross-sectional area.

3. (Original) The shaft according to claim 1 wherein the projection has a tapered tip.

Claims 4-6 (Canceled)

7. (Original) The shaft according to claim 1 wherein the bolt receiving recess is a notch.

8. (Original) The shaft according to claim 1 wherein the bolt receiving recess is an annular groove.

9. (Previously Presented) A shaft coupling assembly comprising:

a coupling element including a shaft-receiving slot having a bottom surface and a bolt receiving through bore extending through the coupling element perpendicular to the shaft-receiving slot, a portion of said bolt receiving through bore closest to the slot bottom surface being at a distance X from the slot bottom surface;

a retaining bolt extendable through the coupling element bolt retaining through bore such that the retaining bolt extends at least partially into the shaft-receiving slot with a portion of the bolt at the distance X from the slot bottom surface;

an axial shaft body having upper and lower surfaces and terminating in a forward end configured to be inserted in the shaft-receiving slot;

a bolt receiving recess in the upper shaft surface adjacent the forward shaft end and configured to receive and retain the retaining bolt after the shaft forward end is inserted in the shaft-receiving slot; and

at least one projection extending axially from the shaft forward end, the at least one projection having an upper surface contiguous with the upper shaft surface, the projection upper surface being spaced from the shaft lower surface a distance greater than X.

10. (Previously Presented) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 9 wherein the shaft-receiving slot has a given cross-sectional area, the shaft body has a cross-sectional area substantially equal to the shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area and the projection has a cross-sectional area substantially less than the shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area.

11. (Original) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 9 wherein the projection has a tapered tip.

12. (Currently Amended) A shaft coupling assembly comprising:

- a coupling element including a shaft-receiving slot having a bottom surface and a bolt receiving through bore extending through the coupling element perpendicular to the shaft-receiving slot, a portion of said bolt receiving through bore closest to the slot bottom surface being at a distance X from the slot bottom surface;
- a retaining bolt extendable through the coupling element bolt retaining through bore such that the retaining bolt extends at least partially into the shaft-receiving slot with a portion of the bolt at the distance X from the slot bottom surface;
- an axial shaft body having upper and lower surfaces and terminating in a forward end configured to be inserted in the shaft-receiving slot;

a bolt receiving recess in the upper shaft surface adjacent the forward shaft end and configured to receive and retain the retaining bolt after the shaft forward end is inserted in the shaft-receiving slot; and

at least one projection extending from the shaft forward end, the at least one projection having an upper surface contiguous with the upper shaft surface, the projection upper surface being spaced from the shaft lower surface a distance greater than X

wherein the bolt receiving through bore is spaced a given distance from an opening into the shaft-receiving slot and the projection has a length equal to or greater than the through bore distance.

13. (Previously Presented) A shaft coupling assembly comprising:

a coupling element including a shaft-receiving slot having a bottom surface and a bolt receiving through bore extending through the coupling element perpendicular to the shaft-receiving slot, a portion of said bolt receiving through bore closest to the slot bottom surface being at a distance X from the slot bottom surface;

a retaining bolt extendable through the coupling element bolt retaining through bore such that the retaining bolt extends at least partially into the shaft-receiving slot with a portion of the bolt at the distance X from the slot bottom surface;

an axial shaft body having upper and lower surfaces and terminating in a forward end configured to be inserted in the shaft-receiving slot;

a bolt receiving recess in the upper shaft surface adjacent the forward shaft end and configured to receive and retain the retaining bolt after the shaft forward end is inserted in the shaft-receiving slot; and

at least one projection extending from the shaft forward end, the at least one projection having an upper surface contiguous with the upper shaft surface, the projection upper surface being spaced from the shaft lower surface a distance greater than X; and

a second projection extending from the shaft forward end adjacent the shaft lower surface, the second projection substantially opposed to the projection extending adjacent the shaft upper surface with an open area defined therebetween.

14. (Previously Presented) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 13 wherein the first and second projections are slightly flexible.

15. (Previously Presented) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 13 wherein the shaft-receiving slot has a given cross-sectional area, the shaft body has a cross-sectional area substantially equal to the shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area and the first and second projections have a combined cross-sectional area substantially less than the shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area.

16. (Previously Presented) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 13 wherein the bolt receiving through bore is spaced a given distance from an opening into the shaft-receiving slot and the first or second projection has a longitudinal length equal to or greater than the given through bore distance.

17. (Previously Presented) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 9 wherein the bolt receiving recess is a notch.

18. (Previously Presented) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 9 wherein the bolt receiving recess is an annular groove.